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## East Texas

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## EAST TEXAS

C. K. CHAMBERLAIN

On September 12, 1866 Lyne T. Barret brought in the first oil well in the Southwest. It was 106 feet deep and produced ten barrels of oil a day. For the next sixty years the area around the original well was worked by various individuals and the oil supplied the needs for lumber trains that operated near this location. Because oil bubbled to the surface Barret's field became known as Oil Springs. It is located seventeen miles southeast of Nacogdoches.

On May 14, 1963 Miss Gladys Hardeman read a research paper titled *The First Oil Well in Texas and the Southwest* to the Nacogdoches Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. The paper was brought to the attention of the local Chamber of Commerce and steps were immediately taken to remember Barret's action by means of a centennial celebration.



Oil Springs Before Restoration

A. L. Mangham, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, and R. Travis King, Chamber president, contacted the Texas Mid-Continent Gas and Oil Association, which acts as a promotional and publicity agency for the Texas oil and gas industry. Mid-Continent agreed to co-sponsor the centennial and to contribute \$3,000 to cover publicity expenses and to erect a memorial marker.

The actual celebration took place on September 30, 1966 on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State College. The marker was placed near the Old Stone Fort, a location where it can be easily maintained and will be accessible to tourists. The day-long event was jointly sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, Stephen F. Austin State College, and Texas Mid-Continent Gas and Oil Association, but it represented a total effort on the part of the Nacogdoches community. Invitations were extended to many prominent officials. Dignitaries who attended included Frank Taylor, director of the United States National Museum of the Smithsonian Institute, Ben Ramsey and Jim C. Langdon of the Texas Railroad Commission, William A. Landreth, honorary president of Mid-Continent, Charles Simones, executive vice president of Mid-Continent, F. G. Gragg, vice president of the International Paper Company, the organization which owns Oil Springs today, and United States Senator John Tower.

The day began with a nine o'clock coffee honoring the Barret descendants and hosted by the Altrusa Club, a Nacogdoches professional women's group, and the local Oil Centennial Committee. At ten o'clock a parade started in the business district and ended at the dedication site. The parade included antique cars and modern equipment which uses oil products. Color was added by costumed Indians from the Livingston Reservations, high school and college bands, a sheriff's posse, and several floats representing local history. Nacogdoches school children were dismissed to view the parade.

Ben Ramsey of the Texas Railroad Commission addressed several hundred persons with a speech extolling Barret, before the marker was dedicated. John Ben Shepherd, state chairman of the Texas State Historical Survey Commission, presented Barret descendants with a marker to be placed on Barret's grave at Melrose, Texas. Senator Tower told the audience he would have the observance of the Oil Centennial placed in the Congressional Record. Dr. Ralph W. Steen, president of Stephen F. Austin State College, acted as master of ceremonies at the dedication.



Lyne Taliaferro Barret Memorial

After the ceremonies, guests attended a barbecue prepared by the local fire department and served by members of the Nacogdoches Kiwanis Club. Later in the afternoon Jaycees ran buses to the Oil Springs location. Guests were presented with attractive folders and pamphlets and oil samples from the original springs, all commemorating the event. One pamphlet, telling the story of Barret's life, was written by Frank X. Tolbert of the Dallas Morning News.

The International Paper Company, which has leased 7 acres of Oil Springs to the City of Nacogdoches, hopes that in the future some arrangement can be made to ensure the permanency of the location as a memorial park. Under the direction of the chief of the Nacogdoches fire department, Delbert A. Teutsch, and with the assistance of the International Paper Company, the Community Action Committee, and Commissioner Woodrow Palmer, the land has been cleared. Existing appurtenances of old wells have been marked for display. Four of the existing wells have been reconstructed with tall pine tripods that were used to raise and lower drill stems in pioneer times. Paths have been laid and picnic tables installed. Visitors who roam the area might discover other old wells for oil still seeps out of the ground in a number of places.

In May of this year, 1967, Herbert Wilson, who serves as chairman of both the Nacogdoches Historical Commission and the Nacogdoches County Historical Survey Committee, announced that the Texas State Historical Survey Commission will soon erect an official marker at Oil Springs. Thus the work of the East Texas community continues to commemorate an event of historic importance, the spark that instigated the start of Texas' great oil and gas industry.

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San Augustine is the first Texas community to celebrate its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary. This was done through a pageant, "San Augustine on El Camino Real For 250 Years," which was presented June 2, 3, and 9, 1967. The pageant is the story of a town—San Augustine—first a mission on a trail, then a settlement on a road, and finally a town on a royal highway, the El Camino Real or the King's Highway. The official name so far as Texas is concerned is the Old San Antonio Road.

To preserve the record of the pageant and to serve as a guide to the history of San Augustine, a pamphlet, *San Augustine Cradle of Texas*, has been published and a sesquicentennial coin may be purchased which serves not only as a memento but also helped to finance the pageant.

Most of the individuals who took part in the pageant were descendants of the first Anglo-Americans who settled in the area. The experience has been so gratifying that the committee has decided to present the pageant again on April 26 and 27, 1968. This presentation is intended to be a tie-in with San Antonio's HemisFair.

As Mrs. Nelsyn (Julia) Wade writes, "Members of other historical societies will want to give pageants from time to time commemorating various events in their histories. Perhaps the report of the Script and Staging Committee would be of help in going about it."





This is an excellent suggestion and the report follows:

**REPORT OF THE SCRIPT AND STAGING COMMITTEE OF THE  
SAN AUGUSTINE 250th ANNIVERSARY HISTORICAL PAGEANT:**

"The fact that the San Augustine 250th Anniversary Historical Pageant was successful is now part of our history and our heritage. The real report of this committee was given the nights of June 2, 3, and 9, of 1967, in Wolf Stadium in San Augustine, Texas, when the citizens of this town re-enacted their own story with zest, charm, and a sense of personal involvement that delighted and impressed all who watched the story unfold before them.

Presenting this Pageant took the cooperation of the entire town \_\_\_\_\_ and we had that cooperation. Everyone was wonderful. Some commented they had become acquainted with people they had never known before, and had lived here for years. We all learned to know and appreciate our friends and neighbors more. This was itself a re-enactment of history, for Dr. [George] Crockett commented that the Fredonian Rebellion and conventions gave the people a spirit of union, confidence to act together, thus they were successful in the effort for independence. Now, again, we have learned to act together, and can work together for the progress of our East Texas.

Perhaps you would be interested in knowing how the Pageant took the form it did.

The title, "San Augustine on El Camino Real," suggested the thread running through the history: "the Road." "The Road" caused the town to develop as it did. Events took place along "the Road." "The Road" dominated the staging, as well as the script, as El Camino Real cut its winding way across our Stadium-Stage.



Pioneer Couple

When the decision to present a 250th Anniversary Historical Pageant was made in February, we were at a complete loss as to how and where to begin. We discovered that the Centennial Pageant of 1936 did not fit the needs of the 250th Birthday Celebration. So, it was necessary to go back to the original sources, do our own research, and develop the History of San Augustine in such a way as to present the theme that the Historical Society had stated as its aim: The rich heritage our children have here, which was bought at a dear price by our own ancestors. During the period of research, the recurring thought kept emerging like a persistent drumbeat: The spirit of independence and self-determination, the love of liberty—these caused San Augustine to "Be" here, and caused its citizens to come to this beautiful land, and fight for it, die for it, and live for it. From the beginning, the men have gone to war after war from this garden spot of the world, in order that their families live in liberty. *This had to be presented—through our historical pageant.*

San Augustine was settled by very high calibre citizens with great leadership ability, and have been influential in the entire history of Texas from the very beginning—we are the "Cradle of Texas History."

San Augustine has been not only the Cradle of *History*, but the Cradle of *Religion* in Texas. We attempted to show the beginnings of the Roman Catholic church with its faithful missionaries who would not give up in discouragement, but were *forced* to leave by higher authority. Then, the Protestant preachers who came and preached under brush arbors before organized churches were allowed. And, when Mexican government no longer prevented, Protestant churches were built—first in San Augustine. The laying of the first Methodist Cornerstone was the climatic ending of the first Act of the Pageant.



**Captain Ramon and Father Margil  
establishing Mission, 1717**

Legend and mystery was inserted by the Lady-in-Blue, who is a documented fact, but has never been understood.



**Reverend Francis Wilson  
Preaching at Brush Arbor Revival**



Knowing that straight history might be dry, we inserted a square dance in the middle of the first act, a Virginia Reel at the beginning of the second Act, and ended the Pageant with the spectacular 4-H Quadrille, the tremendously effective square-dance on horseback. The Alabama-Coushatta Indians' colorful native dances were a most appropriate beginning. The choir provided atmosphere, as well as the theme-song, "This is My Country," which gave focus to the entire endeavor. The horseback scenes provided change of pace—and, I might say, suspense. The hostile Indians, the desperadoes, and the Texas Rangers. The covered wagons were breathtakingly effective... and, the buckboard with the casket of Captain Brooks was stark tragedy. The scenery on wheels carried out the idea of movement along the "Road," as well as being the most effective way to get the scenery on and off quickly. The automobiles of various times brought the Pageant up to 1967, giving us movement along "the Road," while quickly presenting more recent events in San Augustine history.



**Mrs. Nelsyn Wade as Mrs. James Pinckney Henderson**  
**Sant Perry as Governor Ripperda**  
**Mrs. Bob Roper as an Early Settler**  
(She is robed for "the Lady-in-Blue")

Many, many people were responsible for all of these effects—hundreds of San Augustine people contributing and cooperating to present their history to the world. And, each one dressed in colorful appropriate costumes, either painstakingly sewed by loving hands, or carefully rented at the expense of each person. Everyone did his very best to be costumed accurately. Thousands of hours went into this presentation.





**Local "Indians" Preparing for an Attack  
Lewis Nolan Miller and Lester Hightower, Jr.**

How did we choose the events to be shown in the Pageant, from all the things that have happened during these 250 years?

We tried to keep in mind our "Title," and "Theme." It was necessary to let some actions represent many happenings.



**Pioneer Settlers Cooking**

The decision was made, after various books and papers conflicted as to certain dates, to let Dr. Crocket's *Two Centures in East Texas* be the final authority on material used in the Pageant. Much valuable information was found in Mrs. Norvell's *The King's Highway*. We finally found the perfect introduction in Mrs. Norvell's book: a quotation from Dr. George Crocket! From these books, an outline of the important events and dates of San Augustine history was made. Decisions were then made as to which of these events could be successfully staged. I wanted to put *all* of it in. When the crew came from Shreveport, and saw the first draft of the script, Ken Holoman asked why we didn't have it condensed, and publish it as a set of encyclopedias? So—cutting was necessary. Everything that didn't happen right here was removed. General Gaines and his army on the Sabine; the seventeen men who fooled the Mexican Army into surrender on the Angelina, and other things that vitally affected our history, but did not happen here. Thus, the battles for Texas' Independence were not shown, only those who passed along the "Road" to die in those conflicts.

Other important happenings of San Augustine history had to be sacrificed in the interest of time and continuity. The Fredonian Rebellion would have made a terrific scene—but would have been so powerful that it would have overshadowed the rest of the show—and it would have been impossible to show all that whooping for the Mexican government, and our enthusiasm on putting down a Rebellion, only in the very next scene to have to establish that Mexican tyranny was intolerable, and all the citizens were for revolution. So, the Fredonian Rebellion was left to narration.

There has never been a more noble nor a sadder chapter written than Dr. Crocket's chapter on the Civil War. We pondered carefully the best method of presenting the emotional impact of the terrible tragedy of it. The Director suggested that *one* family would get more sympathy than regi-



A Civil War Farewell

ments of soldiers. The Travis G. Broocks family gave so much, that it seemed right that they be chosen to represent all those who sacrificed for a principle—this same independence and self-determination that has characterized San Augustine citizens throughout history. The cast for this Civil War Scene was chosen to look the part—the tall, handsome sons, and the father of proud bearing. This scene was to represent the tragedy of all the wars our men have fought. Those who had to leave, and those who were left behind.

Thus, the scenes were chosen. Scene descriptions were written. Casting was done, and cast members began working with the Costume Committee getting their costumes together. Scenery assignments were made, and the scenery materials gathered, and building started. Music was chosen; choir and band began practicing. And, at last the narrative words that were read during the Pageant must be written. We called these the "good words." We wanted them to have a ring of glory, as well as being completely historically accurate. The narration is substantially the same as was written for the Program Booklets, but timed to the scene action.

The Program Booklets were made to be not only a souvenir, but a reference for San Augustine history, containing as it does a brief history of San Augustine, giving pertinent dates, and using El Camino as continuity. This booklet can be used by students—our own children, and also those who write to San Augustine inquiring about our history.

Thus the SCRIPT took shape. And, the PROGRAM was made.

STAGING San Augustine's 250-year History was done with the help of chairmen for each scene. These chairmen organized their scenes, contacted every member of the scene for rehearsal, explained the action of the scene to them, and gathered together everything needed in that scene. These chairmen did a marvelous job, and without them the Pageant could not have been presented. The crew from Shreveport coordinated the scenes, and Director Phillip Anderson worked through these scene chairmen to direct the entire Pageant.

Radio Station KDET of Center in the person of Jack Bell provided narration and amplifiers for the Pageant of a professional nature and quality, at no cost to us. Jack Bell gave of his professional time and ability and equipment, bringing his truck and loudspeakers for our use during the Pageant.

Many people gave much to make our 250th Anniversary Pageant successful—donations of lumber, fabric, metal, time, labor, nails, wagons, long distance calls, trips, typing, horses, paint, and work, work, work. San Augustine people worked together for a common cause—with a determination to present our story to the World—

And, we succeeded.

We know now that we can succeed in anything we do."



Judge and Mrs. R. N. Stripling  
County Judge Longer Than Any Other  
Mrs. Stripling was 250th Anniversary  
"Sweetheart"

Tyler County has several outstanding museums: among them are the Kirby Memorial at Peach Tree near Chester; the Heritage Garden which has been called "Texas' newest and most authentic museum of pioneer living," located in Woodville; and the Allan Shivers Museum and Library in Woodville. The Allan Shivers Museum occupies one of the area's oldest houses, which has been moved from its original location, to make way for a modern motel, and which has been restored and beautifully furnished by the Allan Shivers family.



Allan Shivers Museum and Library



The Shivers family is also furnishing the museum. In one room is a photographic history of ex-Governor Allan Shivers from babyhood through his terms as governor of Texas. There are also cartoons of Governor Shivers' political career; some are favorable and some are critical. One of the outstanding rooms in the museum proper is the rare bookroom which consists of books about Texas. Some of the books indeed are rare, but included in the collection are recent publications. The Shivers family is responsible for the rare books, and also for the recent publications.

The living room has been restored at great expense. Much of the original furniture came from New Orleans, and the restored furniture is in exact replica. The carpets and draperies, as the originals, were purchased in France.

The Shivers family has given many volumes that are in the library proper, which is connected with the museum by a glass enclosed walkway. This makes it possible for the library to serve the community even when the museum is closed. The Allan Shivers Library is now the center for a bookmobile which serves Tyler, Hardin, and Polk counties. The library and the bookmobile have thousands of volumes which are used by adults and particularly by school children. Mrs. Dicy Collins is librarian, and Mrs. Katherine Brodnax is assistant librarian.

The bookmobile was moved to the Shivers library in 1964 and the library and museum were dedicated in October 1966 during the state convention for small museums which held its state meeting in Woodville.

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The old Howard-Dickinson home on South Main Street, built in 1855, is the oldest brick home in Henderson. The Rusk County Heritage Association in 1967 compiled the interesting history of the old home and has published it as a monographed pamphlet which may be obtained from the Association.

On October 17, 1905, Mrs. M. A. Howard and Dora Howard sold the house to Mrs. M. A. Dickinson, and on October 20, 1950, Homer Bryce purchased the house from Miss Katie Dickinson. On April 27, 1964, twenty-five citizens of Henderson petitioned the Texas Secretary of State for a charter for the Rusk County Heritage Association and the charter was granted July 1, 1964, and Judge Charles Langford became the first president of the Association.

The present object of the Association is to restore and refurnish the old home. As Mrs. Carl (Maida) Jagers writes:



**Howard-Dickinson Home**



"This lovely old house has stood high and proud on its terrace fronting South Main Street in Henderson since 1855, the first all brick plastered house built in Rusk County. It was acquired by The Rusk County Heritage Association in December, 1964, a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Homer L. Bryce. Our small group, a tax free, non-profit association duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas, has labored long and hard, and through sheer grit and determination, we have carried out our first goal: 'Preservation Now—Restoration Later' and beyond. Today, we are happy to report that the restoration job is some 70% complete. We have accomplished approximately a \$20,000.00 restoration work at our actual cost of somewhere in the neighborhood of only \$8,900.00, because of labor and materials given and donations from clubs, civic groups and individuals. We owe NO money for any of this!

We need about \$4,000.00 more to completely restore the Howard-Dickinson House to its early grandeur and beauty. It is our aim to furnish it throughout as authentically as possible. When this final restoration is completed the House will be self-sustaining, and will be opened to the public for weddings, teas, parties, as a restoration and museum, pilgrimage, etc.

We are currently undertaking the wrecking of an old building here in Henderson, from which we will salvage enough antique bricks to sell for enough money to help us considerably on our project."

For the past six months, Polk County has been very active in getting markers for places of historical significance in the county. Among those places graced with markers are the birthplace of Margo Jones; the Whitehead Home; The Confederate Shaft in Livingston; Centennial Marker at the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation; Union Springs and Damascus churches; grave marker for William Barnett Hardin; and the Horace Leggett Home in Leggett. In addition to these historical markers, 180 markers have been placed on Confederate veterans' graves and eleven more Confederate grave markers have been applied for.

Work on the County Archives continues slowly but surely as material is accumulated. The "Polk County Scrapbook" continues to be very popular and contributions have been very helpful.

Work was begun on the new Murphy Memorial Library and accompanying museum after the old house on the site was demolished in April. The museum has received enthusiastic support and many items have been donated. All items are welcomed as they help to preserve the history of Polk County. A number of people helped to sort and catalogue the items for display in the museum. As many items have already been placed on display, visitors are urged to come by and view them. Visitors are urged to pick up several brochures and leaflets that are available. The Chamber of Commerce has prepared a leaflet on the *Moscow, Camden & San Augustine Railroad* and a color brochure on the *Indian Reservation*. Ruth Peebles has prepared a leaflet on *Early Cattle Brands (1846-1849)*, *A List of Confederate Soldiers from Polk County*, and *The 1850 Census of Polk County*. The first two Peebles leaflets are free and the census leaflet may be purchased for 25 cents.

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One of the most fascinating and authentic historical and recreational attractions in East Texas is the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation located in the picturesque Big Thicket between Livingston and Woodville in the eastern part of Polk County. Since 1854, the Alabama and Coushatta Tribes have lived on Texas' only Indian reservation and have preserved a rich heritage. The Reservation is now under the joint jurisdiction of the Texas Commission for Indians Affairs, a newly created state agency, and the elected Tribal Council presided over by Tribal Chief B. Cooper Sylestine and Second Chief Fulton Battise. In order to achieve tribal self-sufficiency and financial security, the "Tribal Enterprises" has been established to promote tourist attractions on the Reservation.

Among the dozens of attractions: the Trading Post; the Museum; Dance Square; and Big Thicket Tour seem to be the most popular. On display in the Arts and Crafts Shop are many hand-made Indian products such as pottery, woven belts, jewelry, and baskets. The Museum displays depict the colorful and interesting heritage of the Alabama and Coushatta Tribes. The "Na-Ski-La Dancers" perform tribal dances on the Dance Square which is patterned on the earlier dance squares used by the tribes hundreds of years ago. The Big Thicket tour provides the visitor with a rare view of a virgin pine forest and a Tupelo Gum swamp from a specially constructed vehicle. More attractions have been planned for the immediate future, such as the construction of a 600-acre lake, with possible canoe trips, boat docks, and fishing areas; and a camping area and rustic cabins located along the lake shore. There is a possibility that covered wagon rides may be provided.

The Reservation is open to visitors daily between the months of March and November. During the winter months, the Reservation is open to visitors only on week-ends. A fine restaurant provides hungry visitors with short orders and Indian foods such as "Sofkee," "Indian Fry Bread," and Indian Bar-B-Que. Since the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation is one of the most fascinating and authentic historical and recreational attractions in the State, visitors are invited to visit the Reservation and thus to step back into the peaceful serenity of yesterday and into a page of Texas History.